

# THE SHEKEL

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**Emanuel Leutze's 1867 painting of the  
Signing of the Alaska Purchase.  
Secretary of State Seward sits at the left and Russian  
Ambassador Stoeckl stands at the right**



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**EDWARD SCHUMAN, EDITOR**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Our Organization.....	2
President's Message.....	3
The Editor's Page.....	4
A Few Comments From DJS.....	5
Jewish History in Alaska.....	6
A Young Girl's Necklace By Stephan Fregger.....	11
Barbados' Jewish History.....	15
Zagaggi Grocery Store Tokens.....	18
Viscount Herbert Louis Samuel.....	20
Escape to the Philippines.....	23
King of the Bagel Legend By Marvin Tameanko.....	36
The Gratz Family.....	31
About Pope Piux II.....	34
Profile of a College Professor By Donna Sims.....	37
Victor Reis & Hall of Fame Medals By Mel Wacks.....	39
Shimon Rokach. The Jewish Sheik.....	43
AINA Dealer Directory.....	46
Membership Application.....	48

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# The President's Message

By Mel Wacks

I am pleased to announce that at this year's board meeting we added Dr. Ira Rezak and Oded Paz to our board. Ira has been a member of AINA from its earliest days. A coin and medal collector for some sixty years, Ira's primary interest is items reflective of Jewish values and history and their influence on other cultures.

Oded's interest in coins began when he used to sit with his father, and view his dad's collection. Since that time, he has enjoyed collecting Israeli and world coins. We have also created an Advisory Board, including Sam Spiegel and Michael Mooney, who will try to help expand our membership, particularly among juniors. But our best promoters are you – our members – and I ask you to please consider giving AINA memberships to youngsters (under 20) for only \$10, and others for just \$18.

We had problems with our website host for several months, but we are now back. AINA's website has been renamed [www.theshekel.org](http://www.theshekel.org) (though our old name [www.amerisrael.com](http://www.amerisrael.com) still works). On our website you will find an Index to The Shekel (1993-2002), a selection of past articles, membership application, and much more.

Speaking of the Internet, AINA member Pinchas Bar-Zeev has created "SHEQEL - The Online Catalog of Israel Numismatics," the world's only comprehensive online catalog of Israel's beautiful coins, medals and currency at <http://sheqel.info>.

I want to thank Donna Sims for putting in hundreds of hours in the last year to keep AINA humming along (and also for her great member profiles that appear in The Shekel), and our inveterate editor Ed Schuman, who has been doing an amazing job since 1977. And I want to especially thank you and all of our members – without you there would be no more AINA and no more Shekel.

Happy collecting,



# The Editor's Message

By Edward Schuman

These days Alaska is in the headlines as future oil drilling rights are being proposed by Congress. "Jewish History in Alaska" is the story of how Jews advocated the purchase of Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million dollars, or less than 2 cents an acre. The purchase was labeled Seward's Folly and cartoons showing him holding a block of ice were seen in the press at that time. The sad story of the Jews of Neustadt and their attempt to immigrate to Alaska and the obstacles placed in their path may not be known by many readers.

"A Young Girl's Necklace" by A.I.N.A. member Steve Fregger is an example of patience research in composing an article. His article is fascinating and it was our pleasure to publish it. Ditto the story of Victor Reis, the 100 year old sculptor who has contributed so much to the Jewish American Hall of Fame metallic series.

You never really know when a story of Judaic numismatics can be found. We have a Filipino male nurse, who has become a dear friend, coming to our condo five days a week to administer the dialysis I require. The first thirty minutes or so is needed by him to put in the cartridges and filters and remove whatever air accumulates in the tubes. After this I am connected we sit around and watch TV or talk. In recent conversation I inquired if there were any Jewish people in the Philippines. He said many years ago there was factory run by rich Jews from the United States. After some research I was able to composed the article "Escape to the Philippines" which is the story of three American brothers and their attempts to save German Jews from the Nazis, has been virtually unknown till now.

Aside from the above, there are many different articles on various topics. I was told by a member that the last issue was one of the finest I had produced and that another issue could never be as diversified. But like fine wine, the older it is, the better it gets. Your editor is almost 82 years old, and blessed with a new lease on life through dialysis, I hope to be around for a number of years.

Till the next issue





## **A FEW COMMENTS FROM DJS**

I am planning to write a "comments" page a couple of times a year, preferably in the Jan/Feb and July/Aug issues of the Shekel. Members took to heart my last "comments" page and I received several responses from those who were willing to be "profiled" throughout this year. However, I am still in need of more people to write about, so please contact me at P.O. Box 20255, Fountain Hills, AZ 85269 and let me know if you need further information. You may also email me direct at [dancin.donna@yahoo.com](mailto:dancin.donna@yahoo.com). I want to thank all of you who have contacted me to say how much you enjoy reading the "Profile" column and how you look forward to seeing who is being written about in the next issue. Remember, everyone has a story to tell; everyone is a story.

Regarding our mailing list. I would like to report that our membership list is now up-to-date and in order for us to have accomplished this, we had to remove a number of names for non-payment of dues. You should know that we sent out three separate dues notices over a period of six months and those who failed to renew their annual membership were removed from our mailing roster. On behalf of AINA, the organization extends its thanks and appreciation to all those who submitted a donation along with their dues. Unless otherwise designated, donations are placed in the general fund for operating expenses.

If you have moved, we would appreciate receiving your new mailing address as soon as possible. We have had many Shekel envelopes returned for a variety of reasons – no forwarding address; forwarding time has expired; no such person; no such address, etc. In every instance of a returned envelope, we try very diligently to acquire the new address if at all possible. Sometimes this has worked out but most of the time, it does not. It is very costly to re-send these Shekels at full postage, especially to those who reside overseas.

This is a reminder that room is still available on our two-week trip to Israel the end of October. If you are interested in being a participant or if you just need more information, please contact AINA president Mel Wacks. And lastly, in the next issue of The Shekel, I will have a write-up regarding AINA's activities at the recent ANA Convention held in Baltimore.

Remember these words? Be well, be happy

*Written by Donna J. Sims, NLG*

## Jewish History in Alaska

In the early 1700s the Russia's population exploded. Its population of animals whose skins could be sewn into coats and of course those famous Russian hats declined. The Russians needed a new source of fur. Explorers who had gone off to map the wildernesses at the far eastern edges of the Empire, had reported abundant populations of fur bearing animals there. Before long, adventurous capitalists who understood the laws of supply and demand went to work.

The Danish sea captain Vitus Bering, whose namesake Sea is about a thousand miles northwest of our present position, led the first Russian settlement expedition that established what would eventually become a permanent Russian presence in this far corner of North America. Jewish fur trappers were among his crew.

A little over a hundred years later the fur trade was enormous, increasingly international, and increasingly Jewish. Merchant companies, especially those whose dealings were on the territorial fringe of the Empire, were among the few commercial enterprises open to Jewish participation. One of the largest Alaskan fur ventures, the Russian-American Company, was managed throughout the 1850s by a man named Nikolai Rosenberg. But it wasn't until 1885 that Jews settled permanently there. Robert Goldstein and his family set up a trading post in Juneau, and specialized in sable, beaver, and mink. Juneau's first mayor was Jewish, and the Goldstein Building, which still stands, was used for a time as the state's interim capital.

As the nineteenth century rolled along, Alaska's own population began to explode. President Lincoln's Secretary of State William Seward had purchased Alaska from the Czars in 1867. The price he paid -- \$7.2 million, or less than 2 cents per acre -- was ridiculed in the continental United States as a colossal waste of money. But the merchants of San Francisco, then the largest city in the American west, knew otherwise. Among them were many Jews who had toiled to build a thriving American trade with Russia, and who lobbied intensely for Seward to make the purchase. Their faith in the move was soon vindicated, as the succeeding decades saw discoveries of Alaska's vast mineral wealth -- mother lodes of gold, silver, copper, zinc, coal, and oil.

Prospectors in search of their fortunes migrated north. 20,000 gold-rushers came to the Yukon in 1898 alone. Communities were born as tiny homesteads grew into villages, towns and cities. The institutions of civilized life came next -- roads, schools, markets and places of worship.



Dawson City, whose population today is just 1500, had 40,000 inhabitants in the early 1900s, making it the largest city in North America north of San Francisco. It was the site of the first significant Jewish institution in Alaska. Nearly 200 Jews had settled there. Thirty-six of them gathered for Rosh Hashanah in 1898, and celebrated the first organized Jewish worship in Alaska in the back of Charles Rosener's General Store.

Word spread around the territory, and soon the newly established Hebrew Congregation of Dawson had to rent the commodious Yukon Order of Pioneers Hall, in which they prayed regularly. They founded a cemetery when a young Jewish prospector named Isaac Simons, who had come to Dawson all the way from New York, drowned, and his Alaskan fellow congregants honored him with a proper Jewish burial. That cemetery, Beit Chaiim, was restored and reconsecrated in 1998 as part of the ceremonies commemorating of the 100th anniversary of the Klondike Gold Rush.

Jews have made a disproportionately large contribution to Alaskan history, as they have to every society and culture in which they've lived. Those furriers who accompanied Bering on his famous expedition were second in their influence only to the prominent Jews who came here to profit from the Gold Rush. Lewis Gerstle, a Jewish San Francisco merchant, founded the Alaska Commercial Company, and became a major provider of groceries and general merchandise for trappers, explorers and gold seekers. His steamboat line plied the Yukon River, providing one of the only reliable routes into and out of the territory. His venture capital funds financed an enormous percentage of Alaskan mining. Gerstle's village stores became centers of community activities, serving as post offices, community halls, courtrooms, marriage parlors, funeral homes, and safe havens for travelers, as well as banks which could extend credit to trappers, miners, and fishermen. Gerstle got a river named after him. J.B. Gottstein, another Jewish retail merchant, named his company after himself, and to this day Gottstein's remain's one of Alaska's largest firms.

In 1901, the Jews of Nome, who built the shipping and retailing industries of that city, formed the first Jewish charitable organization in Alaska, the Nome Hebrew Benevolent Society. At around the same time, Nome also gained notoriety for being the location of an establishment called The Dexter, a saloon run by the legendary O.K. Corral gunfighter Wyatt Earp. Mrs. Wyatt Earp was an apparently beautiful young lady by the name of Josephine Sarah Marcus. Her German-Jewish parents moved the family from Brooklyn to San Francisco when Josephine was a child, and in her teen years she met the dashing deputy U.S. Marshal who would steal her heart. After the O.K. Corral, Josephine and Wyatt Earp led a



peripatetic existence that took them to Idaho, remote northern California, and eventually, to Nome where they opened their saloon. Later they moved south to Colma, California, near San Diego, where they are both buried in a Jewish cemetery.

The Jewish community of Fairbanks was founded with the arrival of Lithuanian Jew Robert Bloom in 1904. Bloom ran a general store in town, and was a leader of the Fairbanks Jewish Community for nearly half a century. Earlier a member of the pioneering Hebrew Congregation of Dawson, he became the Yukon's first lay rabbi. He was also a member of an advisory group that helped establish the first United States military base in Alaska, and he was a founder of what would later become the University of Alaska.

Bloom's wife, Jessie Spiro Bloom, met her husband while he was on holiday in Dublin. She left Ireland with her new husband in 1912 to settle in Fairbanks and soon became an active member of the community. A woman's suffrage advocate during her student years in London, she helped the women of Fairbanks organize to win the vote in 1913. Later, while raising four daughters, she established the first kindergarten in Fairbanks and the first Girl Scout troop in Alaska. Together, the Blooms were very active in conservation efforts, supporting the movement to set aside Alaskan land for wilderness preserves. The Blooms also served as unofficial chaplains for Jewish servicemen stationed in Alaska during World War II.

The war years saw one of the stranger episodes in the Alaskan Jewish saga. As the number of European Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany neared crisis levels, a handful of American government officials, frustrated with the rigidity of the country's strict immigration quotas, began to search for solutions. FDR's Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, and New York Congressman Charles Buckley, came up with an extraordinary one. They sought to allow a certain number of Jewish refugees to settle in sparsely-populated Alaska, then still a territory and not yet a State. Roosevelt resisted at first, as did many Americans, some on anti-Semitic grounds, and others opposed to any measure that would increase competition for scarce jobs by bringing foreign workers into the depressed U.S. economy. Alaskans also opposed the plan for a variety of reasons, from provincial xenophobia to worry about the cost of absorbing so many new citizens. In the early summer of 1939, as Europe prepared for war, a letter from Nazi Germany arrived in Washington, D.C., at the high-ceilinged offices of the U.S. State Department. The one-page letter had been pounded out on a typewriter with an old, faded ribbon. The return address was a village in the rolling countryside of central Germany.



The writer identified himself as the leader of the Jewish community in the town of Neustadt. He wrote, he said, *on behalf of 30 men, women and children, all of them "healthy, strong and energetic," who wished to make an urgent application "for immigration to Alaska Territory." The prospective immigrants were experts in animal husbandry, the letter said. Some were also "handicraftsmen and mechanics." They vowed to be good citizens of Alaska and obey the laws of the United States. "We know quite well the difficulties making the rough climate of Alaska," wrote Bruno Rosenthal, "but now we have no other choice, we German Jews."*

One day after his letter arrived at the Department of the Interior, Germany invaded Poland and World War II began. In March, 1940, Roosevelt answered the Neustadt letter, saying that the Alaska immigration plan was still being considered. And it was. Congress debated the proposal in May, 1940, and it collapsed in subcommittee, unable to attract sufficient votes for passage. The Jews of Neustadt perished in the Holocaust, but their letters petitioning Roosevelt remain in the National Archive, a testament to one of the darker moments of American Jewish history.

Alaska's Jewish population waned as the war raged on, falling below 100 in 1940. The following year, Jewish military chaplains arrived to minister to soldiers stationed in the territory, becoming the first ordained rabbis to officiate here. After the war the GI Bill swelled Alaska's population, and brought new Jews to the most remote towns and biggest cities. The first mayor of Anchorage was David Leopold, who was followed in that capacity some years later by another Jew, Zachary Loussac. Former territorial governor Ernest Gruening was elected one of Alaska's two senators when the territory gained statehood in 1959. In 1964, Jay A. Rabinowitz was named to the Alaska Supreme Court. Even some Alaskan mountains (Ripinski, Neuberger, and Applebaum) are named after Jewish pioneers.

Since 1970, the state's Jewish population has grown steadily, fed mostly by Jews moving north from California, Oregon, and Washington. A 1995 survey, the most recent completed, counted a Jewish population of approximately 3,000 in the state, or about six-tenths of one percent of the state's population. But Chabad statistics indicate a presence of some 6,000 Jews, or approximately 1% of the total state's population.

Eighty-one percent of Alaska's Jews live in its three largest cities -- Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau, and fully half of Alaska's Jews live in Anchorage. Although one might assume that the remoteness of Alaska might foster a disinterest in Judaism, or that a Jewish life would be



difficult to sustain here, statistics indicate that the Alaskan Jewish community is surprisingly robust. A recent study showed that fully 42 percent of Alaskan Jews belong to synagogues, compared with 27 percent in the continental US. Most of the Jews here are between the ages of 25 and 62, married, and highly educated. Some 53% of Alaskan Jews are women. The intermarriage rate in Alaska is high. Only 6% of Alaska's Jewish community was born here.

Anchorage boasts a Reform synagogue and a Chabad House, and Fairbanks has a lay-run Reform synagogue. Jewish cemeteries are now established in Anchorage and Fairbanks. Anchorage is also home to chapters of Hadassah and the Anti-Defamation League, and an active outreach program to Jewish communities in Siberia. Kosher food is available at supermarkets in Anchorage and Fairbanks, and in more remote locations, is shipped frozen from Seattle. In addition, the Anchorage Lubavitch rabbi maintains a mikvah.

Alaska does not yet have a formal partnership with Israel; nevertheless, during the 1990s the state exported nearly \$25 million in goods to Israel, which now ranks as Alaska's 35th leading trade partner. Alaska's state nick name is "The Last Frontier," and the name is apt, certainly from the point of view of American Jewry, at least. But its remoteness and isolation notwithstanding, the state's beauty and natural bounty, not to mention the hardiness and determination of its inhabitants, justify another phrase often applied to this remarkable place. That phrase, the state's official motto, may well have been on the lips of those first Jews leaving Russia in search of fur nearly three hundred years ago "North to the Future."





## A Young Girl's Necklace

By Stephan Fregger

I recently added a new Bar Kochba coin to my collection. It is a zuz (plural: zuzim) with a hole in it. A zuz is a small (dime size) silver coin, over-struck on a Roman denarius, and issued by Simon Bar Kochba during the Second Jewish Revolt (132-135 C.E.). The obverse of the coin shows the name "Simon" written in archaic Hebrew letters within a wreath. The reverse of the coin shows a palm branch, surrounded by the archaic Hebrew letters for "For the Freedom of Jerusalem". The coin is undated and attributed to the year 134/135 C.E.



I have several perfect zuzim, but this one is interesting to me *because of the hole in it*. Why would I want a *coin-with-a hole-in-it*, you may ask? Let me tell you a story.

The Second Jewish Revolt, otherwise known as the Bar Kochba Revolt lasted from 132-135 C.E. It began 62 years after the 70 C.E. destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem during the First Revolt in by Roman Emperor Vespasian and his son Titus. The Jews suffered terrible consequences as a result of the First Revolt. Josephus reported that 97,000 prisoners were taken and enslaved, while 1,100,000 perished from war pestilence and famine. The suffering was not only physical, but also spiritual. The Temple as the center of Judaism was demolished, and the remainder of the holy city of Jerusalem – the center of national activities – was razed to the ground by Titus.

In the ensuing six decades, successor Roman emperors dealt harshly with the rebellious province of Judaea. The entire Roman Tenth Legion was stationed in the Judaea to keep order. However, during the rule of Emperor Hadrian, there were indications of sympathetic actions toward the Jews. Hadrian announced his intention to re-build Jerusalem and the Temple. Hadrian visited the ruined city of Jerusalem in 130 C.E., buoying their hopes. Those hopes were dashed, when it was learned that the re-built city would be named "Aelia Capitolina", and the "new Temple" would be a Roman temple dedicated to the pagan god Jupiter . . . and it would be built on the sacred ruins of the Jewish Temple.

In 130 C.E., many Jews were still alive who remembered the glory of their Temple and holy city prior of the destruction - and they longed for a return to that glory. The seeds of rebellion were sown among the Jews. They began to sprout in 132 C.E. from the intolerable indignities of the renaming of their religious capital and the start of the construction of the pagan temple over the site of the holy Temple.

Enter Bar Kochba. His given name was Simon bar Kosiva, meaning Simon, son of Kosiva (his father's name). As his fame grew, many of his followers (including Rabbi Akiva) began to view him as the Messiah. Using a pun on his name, they called him Bar Kochba (Son of a Star) referring to the messianic prophesy of Numbers 24:17: "*There shall step forth a star out of Jacob*".

Bar Kochba was a highly charismatic leader, attracting an army of reportedly 500,000 men, and wide support from his countrymen. He knew the propaganda value of coins in rallying the Jews and tweaking the Romans. Lacking silver and bronze for making coins, he seized Roman coins and re-struck them with his own designs. Often, it is possible to see the outline of a Roman Emperor's head or Latin inscription under the new images. His coins had images that brought pride to his people, including: patriotic sayings; a view of the lost Temple; musical instruments from the Temple (trumpets, lyre, harp, fluted wine jug); religious implements (lulav, ethrog); and other symbols of the country (date palm, palm branch, grapes, vine leaves.)

He was brilliant military leader. His impressive victories, beginning in 132 C.E., caught the Romans off guard. He appears to have driven the Romans off the site of the Temple and perhaps out of the entire city of Jerusalem. He also controlled the countryside. The Talmud (*Sanhedrin 97b*) records that he established an independent state that lasted for two and a half years.

By 133 C.E., the Romans realized that they had a major fight on their hands. They brought in a general from Britain and troops from as far as the Danube. As many as 12 full or partial legions were deployed, which is estimated to be one-third to one-half of the entire Roman army. Still, the Romans continued to suffer major losses. Legion XXII is believed to have been annihilated by Bar Kochba, since it does not appear to have existed after the war. The massive infusion of troops began to turn the tide, and by 135 C.E. it was all over. Bar Kochba died in the battle at Betar, three hours southwest of Jerusalem.

For their part, the Romans were merciless with the Jews. Cassius Dio (*Roman History*) reported:

**Very few of them in fact survived. Fifty of their most important outposts and nine hundred and eighty-five of their most famous villages were razed to the ground. Five hundred and eighty**



**thousand men were slain in the various raids and battles, and the number of those that perished by famine, disease and fire was past finding out.**

Following the war, Hadrian continued extremely harsh measures against the Jews. He would not allow them to bury their thousands of dead warriors fallen at Betar - for 15 years their remains were left scattered on the battlefield. He prohibited the Torah law and the Hebrew calendar; he executed Judaic scholars (including Rabbi Akiva.) He prohibited all Jews from entering Aelia Capitolina, except on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Av, when they were allowed in the city to mourn the loss of the Temple at the Wailing Wall. In an attempt to erase any memory of Judaea, he wiped the name off the map and replaced it with "Palaestina", after the Philistines, the ancient enemies of the Jews.

Understandibly, following the failed revolt, the contemporary Rabbis sought to blot out the memory of Bar Kochba. Not only was he a "false" mesiah, but his revolt was the cause of the loss of hundreds of thousands of Jews, and the loss of access to Jerusalem. The Talmud, refers to Bar-Kochba as "Ben-Kusiba", a derogatory meaning "the son of disappointment"

Back to my coin-with-a-hole-in-it.

Strangely, through the 1800s, the overwhelming majority of zuzim depicted in numismatic publications had holes! Madden's History of Jewish Coinage, published in 1864, includes 17 varieties of zuzim, with 12 showing perforations. Similar findings are seen in the works of Levy and de Saulcy. This is extraordinary, since negligible proportions of other ancient coins are found perforated. These coins doubtlessly were perforated to allow their being used as an adornment or necklace. They generally show signs of wear (mine included). Thus, they must have been used as adornments for years.

Ya'acov Meshorer, in his Ancient Jewish Coinage, discussed the zuz/denarius perforation phenomenon. He noted that Bar Kochba hoards found subsequent to the 19<sup>th</sup> century contained hundreds of coins which were "... *mostly excellently preserved and almost unused* ..." Meshorer cited two Mishnaic and Talmudic passages to explain why there are both worn, perforated zuzim, and also large hoards containing only little-used zuzim, having no perforated ones among them (Note - "zuz" and "denarius" are used interchangeably):

**In the Mishna, Kelim 12,7, which treats the laws of Levitical cleanness and uncleanness of vessels, we find the following: "A denarius which was invalidated and fashioned for hanging around the neck of a young girl is susceptible to uncleanness." This means that when a denarius, which is normally not susceptible to uncleanness, is converted into a "vessel" by being pierced in order**



to transform it into an ornament, the laws of Levitical cleanness and uncleanness apply, as they would with any other vessel."

For the present we are interested in the fact that this Mishna concerns a denarius which was invalidated and then made into an ornament. The Jerusalem Talmud, *Ma'aser Sheni* 1.2, discusses the types of coins into which the second tithe may be turned, reference being made there to doubtful or invalidated coins. The text reads as follows:

With regard to a coin which was invalidated but is accepted by the government . . . (the second tithe) is not exchanged for it. *(The second tithe) is not exchanged for a coin issued by one who rebelled, such as Ben Kusiba.*

The significant point of this quotation is that the coins of the Bar Kochba revolt serve as a classic example of those which have been invalidated.

Now the reason for the two types of surviving zuzim is clear. The Rabbis, in their displeasure of Bar Kochba and his revolt, invalidated the monetary use of his coins. Unable to spend the coins, Jews hoarded them away as bullion for future melting down. Still, some Jewish young girls wore the invalidated coins (including mine) as necklace adornments with pride, commemorating the brief two and a half years of glory when the Jews had their own nation. That national pride and glory would not be repeated again for 1,813 years, until the State of Israel was founded.

Now you know why I wanted this coin-with-a-hole-in-it.

**JUDAEA, Bar Kochba Revolt. 132-135 CE. AR Zuz – Denarius (18mm, 2.68 g). Undated issue (year 3 = 134/5 CE). "Shim'on" in Hebrew within wreath / "For the freedom of Jerusalem," palm branch. Mildenberg 64 (O14/R36); Meshorer 279c; Hendin 724. Good Fine, toned, pierced.**





## **BARBADOS' JEWISH HISTORY**

It started in 1627, when Portuguese Jews fleeing from Recife, Brazil, found refuge on the small, sparsely populated Caribbean island. Alongside the British, who had colonized Barbados around the same time, many became merchants, cultivating coffee and sugar, which they brought with them from Brazil. They established businesses on an island where they enjoyed religious freedom, building a magnificent orthodox synagogue, Nidhei Israel, on a street appropriately named Synagogue Lane, in 1654. Their names were DaCosta, Nehamyas, Mendes, Tolano, and DeMercado, among others, and many of those Jewish names remain inscribed on the country's older buildings, and on the ancient tombstones scattered around the synagogue. Some are even found in the telephone directory, although their descendants, alas, are no longer Jewish.

The Sephardic Jews of Barbados grew in numbers in the 1700s, especially after 1667, when the British colony of Suriname was taken over by the Dutch, and many Jews moved to Barbados to retain their British citizenship. By the end of that century, the small island was home to nearly 800 Jews, with two Jewish communities in the towns of Bridgetown and Speightstown.

The community continued to thrive through the first half of the 1800s, even after a devastating hurricane destroyed Nidhei Israel synagogue in 1831. Undeterred, the Jewish families banded together, to rebuild a stronger structure that, they were certain, would withstand the next hurricane and the next century. When Nidhei Israel's doors reopened for services in 1833, the event was attended by "the most respectable inhabitants and ladies of grace, fashion and beauty," according to a report published in the local newspaper. "It was the day that would ever stand eminently distinguished in the annals of the Hebrew community of the town," mused the paper's editor.

Sadly, his words were not to ring true over the years that followed. Only 15 years later, the Jewish community of Barbados had declined to 70, as a deteriorating economy led many to the United States. Those that remained died and were interred in the cemetery surrounding Nidhei Israel. In 1925, the last surviving Jew on the island sold the synagogue to a local family in the community for alternate use. Artifacts landed in museums and private homes, and it seemed the heyday of Barbados's Jews was gone for good.

In fact, its revival was only six years away. It was 1931 when Moses Altman arrived from Lublin, Poland, fleeing the anti-Semitism that



rendered him an outcast in Eastern Europe. He was actually on his way to Venezuela, but the ship docked at Barbados, and when he disembarked, he liked what he saw and applied for permission to stay. His son, Henry, who joined him a year later at the age of 19 remembers receiving a warm welcome from Barbadians who were happy to have Jews in their midst once again. Other family members, escaping the threat of Nazism in Europe, followed their Ashkenazi relatives to Barbados, until the Jewish community grew to 30 families. They established a synagogue in Altman's home, later purchasing a house in 1969 and converting it into a new synagogue to serve the community. Throughout this time, while the Jewish cemetery surrounding Nidhei Israel was still used by the community, the synagogue itself had been sold to the Barbadian government. By 1983, when the government was scouting the city center for a venue for its new Supreme Court, the old Jewish synagogue seemed like a prime location.

One thing they underestimated, however, was the Jews' attachment to the synagogue, and their determination to regain control over it. Fortunately, some members of Barbados's Jewish community had friends in high places, and within a short time, the government passed a resolution whereby Nidhei Israel was returned to the community. At that point, the considerable task of restoring it and reinstating originals or replicas of the synagogue's artifacts began in earnest. The restoration meant stripping 60 years of accumulated alterations from the synagogue, a complex process that would involve painstaking analysis of old photographs of its interior and efforts to repatriate its artifacts or create exact copies.

A non-Jewish historian by the name of E.M. Shilstone had inadvertently created the vital link between the old Sephardic community and the newer Ashkenazi arrivals to Barbados. He saved the books containing meetings from the minutes of the Sephardic community and had painstakingly recorded and translated the epitaphs on the fading cemetery headstones. The pictures of the synagogue we found were all saved by Shilstone, he filled the missing link between the two Jewish communities of this island. The roof of the synagogue was replaced, chandeliers and intricate latticework were copied and wall sconces and a beautiful stained glass altar window were installed. And when Congregation Nidhei Israel opened its doors once again in 1987, the regal building was completely restored, with informative panels on its walls to educate visitors about its history.



The half penny token of Moses Tolano was issued around 1825. The obverse: MOSES TOLANTO BARBADOES, in the center a bale with the initials M.T Reverse: FREEDOM WITHOUT SLAVERY, a six petal rosette below, in the center is a barrel with the initials M T.

The Synagogue of Bridgetown records the burial on May 30, 1852 of a Moses Tolano. He was the 38 year old son of Joseph Tolano and had been listed as a merchant at 33 Swann Street in Bridgetown. The will of Moses Tolano was registered in the Public Record Office on June 4, 1852. Although the name differs slightly (Tolano rather than Tolanto) it is thought this is the individual who ordered the tokens.



## **Paper Tokens of the Zagaggi Grocery Store**

There still exists a famous grocery store on Bezalel Street in Jerusalem next to the former site of the famous Bezalel School of Art. The school has moved and the building housing the store is not the up-to-date structure that it once was. But the memories of those connected with the Jerusalem store of the thirties and forties are still clear about the Zagaggi family grocery store which was one of the most notable establishments in Jerusalem.

The owner of the store was Noah Zagaggi; and the family operation included three sons. The Zagaggi family grocery store issued a series of tokens used by their store and many of the other large stores in Palestine. There was a shortage of coinage in the Holy Land in the thirties and forties and these tokens constituted a form of emergency small change script.

In addition to their use as change in lieu of coinage - they formed the basis of a credit system among several of the large stores in Jerusalem. Discounts were granted to users of the script. They could be purchased for slightly less than face value in lots of several pounds at a time. They could then be redeemed in the Zagaggi store and many other stores working in cooperation with the Zagaggi store for merchandise only. The customer benefited from the lower prices, and the merchants benefited from the increased sales volume. The Zagaggis benefited from the time value of the money they held until the tokens were redeemed, which provided them with a form of interim financing.

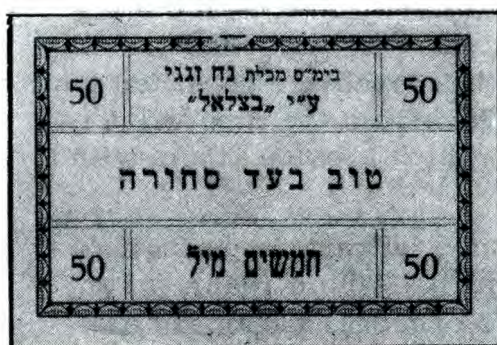
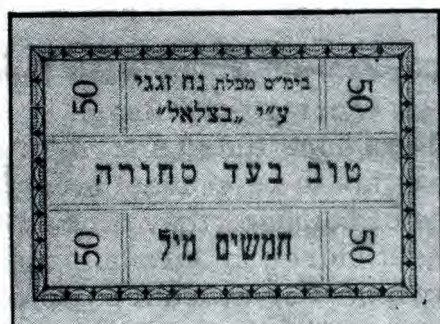
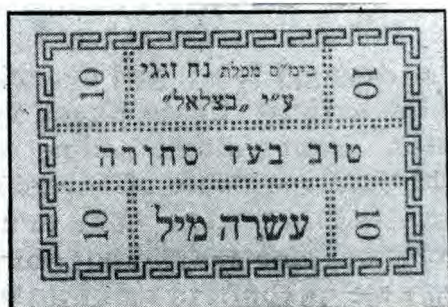
In order to discourage forgeries almost all of the largest denomination - which was 250 mils or a quarter of a pound (a little over \$1.00 in 1948) - were personally signed by either Noah Zagaggi or his son Mordechai Zagaggi. Also, a relatively small number of the 50 mils tokens were signed, or, perhaps more accurately, initialed by the Zagaggis.

There exists today perhaps 100-200 of each denomination# but these seem to be fairly widely scattered and are almost never offered for sale. They are important tokens in that aside from some of the transportation tokens they are the only script known to be available from the Palestine Mandate period. The scarcer pieces are the 5 mils, 20 mils, and small 50 mils.

Fortunately there was one small hoard of unused tokens and all denominations were represented. Thus it is possible to acquire all of the four small tokens and the large 50 mils token in nice condition.



## A Complete Set of the Zagaggi Grocery Tokens





## Viscount Herbert Louis Samuel

### First High Commissioner of Palestine

Herbert Louis Samuel was born in Liverpool in 1870 but raised in London. He was educated at University College School in Hampstead, London and Balliol College, Oxford. He had a religious upbringing but in Oxford his beliefs underwent a radical change and he went to the extreme length of renouncing all religious belief, declaring he would no longer adhere to any outward practice of religion and in 1892 wrote to his mother that he would never be able to attend a synagogue. He remained a member of the Jewish community, and kept kosher and the Sabbath "for hygienic reasons."

By the age of 18, Samuel had become an active Liberal. In 1902, he entered parliament and in 1906 held his first junior ministerial office at the Home Office. In 1909, Samuel became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with a seat in the Cabinet - the first held by a professing Jew. In 1910, he was appointed Postmaster General and, in 1914, president of the local government board.

During World War I, Samuel began to take part in Zionist activities. He helped Chaim Weizmann in the work that ultimately led to the Balfour Declaration. Samuel became a dedicated Zionist.

In 1917, Britain occupied Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire, during the course of the First World War. He was appointed to the position of High Commissioner in 1920 as the military government withdrew to Cairo, in preparation for the expected British Mandate, granted 2 years later by the League of Nations.

When the first high commissioner for Palestine arrived in Jerusalem, he was met with a seventeen-gun salute and endless words of welcome. Sir Herbert Samuel made the journey in June 1920, and served as high commissioner for a period of five years. His appointment was viewed by many Jews as affirmation that the British promise for a Jewish National Home in Palestine would be honored. Samuel himself was moved by the outpouring of emotion which greeted him in the Land of Israel. He had been raised in an Orthodox Jewish home, and although he subsequently ceased practicing, he remained intensely interested in Jewish communal problems.

Samuel first presented the idea of a British protectorate in 1915. In a memorandum to Prime Minister Asquith, he proposed that a British protectorate be established which would allow for increased Jewish settlement. In time, the future Jewish majority would enjoy a considerable



degree of autonomy. Herbert believed that the creation of a Jewish center would flourish spiritually and intellectually, resulting in the character improvement of Jews all over the world. At that time, however, Prime Minister Asquith was not interested in pursuing such an option, and no action was taken.

Yet significant groundwork had been accomplished, and it was on the basis of Samuel's work that the Balfour Declaration was later written. It was therefore no surprise that he served in this office until 1925. Samuel was the first Jew to govern the historic land of Israel in 2,000 years.

From The New York Times September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1922:

**There was a picturesque ceremony this afternoon in the Council Hall of Government House when Sir Herbert Samuel took the oath of office as High Commissioner and Commander in Chief of Palestine in the presence of Field Marshal Lord Allenby, who liberated Palestine from the Turks, Emir Abdallah, ruler of Transjordan, and a brilliant gathering of the Diplomatic Corps, religious dignitaries, British army officers and high officials of the Administration. In his speech on assuming office, Sir Herbert said that the ceremony marked another stage in the long and varied history of the Holy Land. He hoped that under the broad shelter of the British Empire the period which was opening would be peaceful and full of progress for Palestine. "This ceremony is consequent upon the assumption through King George of the solemn charge for the well being of Palestine. As his humble representative I make oath of allegiance to him and that I will conduct the administration without fear of favor, with justice for all and partiality to none."**

Samuel's appointment to High Commissioner of Palestine was controversial. While the Zionists welcomed the appointment of a Jew to the post, the military government, headed by Allenby and Bols, called Samuel's appointment "highly dangerous". Bols said the news was received with 'consternation, despondency, and exasperation' by the Moslem and Christian population ... They were convinced that he would be a partisan Zionist and that he would represent a Jewish position and not a British Government.

During his term of office, the Jewish population doubled; extensive Jewish settlement was carried out; local councils were organized and the Hebrew language was recognized as one of the three official languages of the country. Anxious to serve his country well, Samuel made it clear that his policy was to unite all dissenting groups under the British flag.



Attempting to appease the Arabs in Palestine, Samuel made several significant concessions. It was he who appointed Hajj Amin al-Husseini, a noted Arab nationalist extremist, to be Mufti of Jerusalem. In addition, he slowed the pace of Jewish immigration to Palestine, much to the distress of the Zionists. In attempting to prove his impartiality, the Zionists claimed that he had gone too far, and had damaged the Zionist cause. Many Zionists were ultimately disappointed by Samuel, who they felt did not live up to the high expectations they had of him.

Samuel returned to politics in England and in 1928 reentered the House of Commons. In 1931 he became Home Secretary in the national government led by Ramsay MacDonald, but in 1932 he resigned as result of policy differences.

Samuel had been knighted in 1920 and in 1937 was made a Viscount. He led the Liberal Party in the House of Lords from 1944 to 1955. Samuel's interest in the development of the Jewish National Home never dimmed. He was a constant supporter of the Hebrew University and a member of its Board of Governors. He fought against the anti-Zionist policy adopted in the 1939 White Paper, as well as against Britain's anti-Zionist policy after World War II. Herbert Samuel died on 5th February, 1963 and was buried in London.

A medal of Samuel by Paul Vince is shown below.





# ESCAPE TO THE PHILIPPINES

The Frieder family of Cincinnati lived an idyllic life in Manila, having moved their two-for-a-nickel cigar making business from Manhattan to the Philippines Islands, a commonwealth of the U.S. in 1921 where production was cheaper. Four brothers, Alex, Philip, Herbert, and Morris Frieder, took turns living in Manila, joining the small Jewish community. Traveling back and forth by boat, each brother and his family spent two years in the Philippines living in a beautiful home overlooking the rice fields.

While the Frieders were living a life of privilege in the Philippines, the Nazi Party was on the rise in Germany, and the rich Jewish cultural life came under attack. The horrifying scenes of Kristallnacht, November 9, 1938, convinced many Jews that Germany was no longer safe. For two days the Nazis brutally destroyed Jewish homes, businesses, cemeteries, and over 1,000 synagogues, and arrested 30,000 German-Jewish men, placing them in concentration camps. Fearing for their lives, many Jews escaped Germany, often fleeing to little-known destinations

Meanwhile, the small Jewish community in Manila listened to the news coming from Europe with growing apprehension. Learning that German Jews were seeking to escape Nazi tyranny, the Manila community was anxious to help. The entire community raised money to help Jews in Shanghai, but when the money was not needed, they kept it for emergencies.

The Frieders were part of the elite social circle in Manila, which allowed them to have access to influential people who might be willing to help. Their crucial connections helped bring about the immigration of Jews from Germany and Austria. U.S. High Commissioner Paul McNutt went to the Refugee Economic Corporation with the idea of choosing immigrants to come to the Philippines as long as the existing Jewish community helped to support them

Because of their personal relationship with Manuel Quezon, the Frieder brothers were able to ask him for help. Quezon responded by opening the doors to Jewish immigration. Morris Frieder's letter outlines a plan for 10,000 Jewish refugees to find haven in the Philippines. Quezon donated some of his own land for the building of a residence hall, Marikina Hall, for the refugees who eventually began referring to themselves as "Manilaners." The war brought immigration to a halt, but not before 1,200 Jews were rescued from the Nazis.



Shortly following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese forces occupied the Philippines. The battle to retake Manila began in early 1945. Some of the refugees were caught between the advancing Allied forces and retreating Japanese, as the battle was fought in the streets of Manila. Refugees lost family members, homes and possessions in the brutal battle.

In addition to losing friends and family, homes, and possessions, the Jewish community also lost their beloved synagogue. Temple Emil was taken over by the Japanese commander in late 1944, and was destroyed during the Battle of Manila. In a service on November 9, 1945, commemorating the seventh anniversary of Kristallnacht, a group of Jewish servicemen and women donated funds to rebuild the synagogue.

In the years after the war, many of the refugees made their way to the United States or the new state of Israel, but they did not forget the haven that they had found in the Philippines. On the weekend of February 11th, 2005, Frieder relatives, Manuel Quezon III - the grandson of Philippine president Manuel Quezon, relatives of U.S. Commissioner Paul V. McNutt, Philippine Ambassador H.E. Albert Del Rosario, "Manilaners," including author of *Escape to Manila*, Refuge from the Holocaust, Frank Ephraim, and members of the Filipino and Jewish communities of Cincinnati came together to celebrate the story of one of the war's most improbable rescues.

The weekend began with a Sabbath prayer service commemorating the 60th anniversary of the destruction of Manila's synagogue, Temple Emil, followed by an elegant banquet with food, music and dance from the Philippines. The weekend concluded with a Public Program at Plum Street Temple, featuring eyewitnesses, dignitaries and members of the community.

The commemoration of such heroic acts did not go unnoticed. In an award ceremony in May, at the Philippines Embassy in Washington, D.C., the visiting Secretary of Foreign Affairs, the Honorable Alberto Romulo, conferred Presidential Decorations, the National Order of Civic and Political Merit and the Order of Lakandula, (rank of Grand Cross) posthumously to the Frieder Brothers of Cincinnati and to High Commissioner, Paul V. McNutt, who helped spearhead the rescue of Jews fleeing Nazi Germany to a safe haven in the Philippines.

The Government of the Philippines also conferred the Order of Lakandula (rank of Commander) on Frank Ephraim, author of *"Escape to Manila,"* and to Racelle R. Weiman, who was instrumental in the rescue initiative gaining worldwide attention through educational and outreach efforts of The Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.



"We wanted to tell the world about the humanity of these men who did so much to save so many people and were never recognized," said Racelle Weiman, director of the Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education. "We hope it will make people realize that everyone can make a difference."

In an elegant and moving award ceremony at the Philippines Embassy in Washington, D.C., the visiting Secretary of Foreign Affairs, the Honorable Alberto Romulo, the counterpart to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, conferred Presidential Decorations on several members of the Cincinnati Jewish community. Her Excellency, President Gloria Arroyo, requested Secretary Romulo, as part of his state visit to Washington, to hold an unprecedented Awards ceremony to present the National Order of Civic and Political Merit, The Order of Lakandula, (rank of Grand Cross) posthumously to the Frieder Brothers of Cincinnati, and to High Commissioner, Paul V. McNutt, who helped spearhead the rescue of Jews fleeing Nazi Germany to a safe haven in the Philippines.

A five peso banknote, issued in 1921, the year the Frieder brothers relocated their cigar manufacturing business to the Philippines is illustrated below. The note was issued by the Philippine National Bank and bears the photograph of McKinley





## JOHN III, SOBIESKI OF POLAND, KING OF THE BAGEL LEGEND

By Marvin Tameanko

A quaint Jewish legend connects the king of Poland, John or Johann III (Jan III in Polish), Sobieski, 1674-1696, with the delectable, donut-shaped bread rolls we know as bagels. This fable is so widespread and popular that it has been adopted into traditional Jewish folklore, appears in many books about Jewish food, and is frequently quoted in sermons preached in synagogues. And, like all such folk tales, the story is based on some historical facts combined with a fair measure of fiction. So, it would be interesting to examine the historical background and origins of this tantalizing myth about our national food, the bagel.



A gold ducat of John III Sobieski, 1667-1696, King of Poland, struck in Danzig in 1677, showing his royal coat of arms. *Handbook of Polish Numismatics* by M. Gumowski, cited as Gumowski, 2043.

The most commonly told version of the bagel story is based on some well documented, important historical events and, therefore, it sounds authentic and authoritative. This tale usually begins with an introduction explaining that John III Sobieski was a King of Poland who showed friendship to his Jewish subjects despite the objections of the church and the Polish nobility. Sobieski retained and enforced the laws of his predecessors, King John II Casimir, 1648-1668, who granted the Jews of Cracow the rights of free trade and relief from special taxes, and also he restored the decrees of King Michael Wisniowiecki, 1669-1673, who granted the Jews of Poland some exceptional privileges. Before being elected king in 1674 Sobieski was a commander in the Polish army that restrained the rampaging, rebellious Ukranian Cossacks, led by Bogdan Chmielnicki. The infamous Cossacks specialized in terrorizing



the Jews of Poland and hoards of these brutal horsemen incited bloody pogroms killing 100,000 Jews and wiping out 300 Jewish communities. Sobieski also participated in the defeat of the Turks invading Poland at the famous battle of Lemberg in 1675. His apparent friendship with the Jews when he became King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, came about when he attempted to restore the failed Polish economy by using the resources and talent of Jewish bankers and merchants. His trust of the Jews is perhaps indicated by the fact that his two personal, court physicians were Jewish. As well, Sobieski reformed the Polish army updating the infantry and artillery and totally recreating the cavalry so that it soon became famous as the most effective horse mounted force in European warfare. The Polish trooper wore large eagle's wings on their shoulders, attached to their armor, to distinguish them in battle.



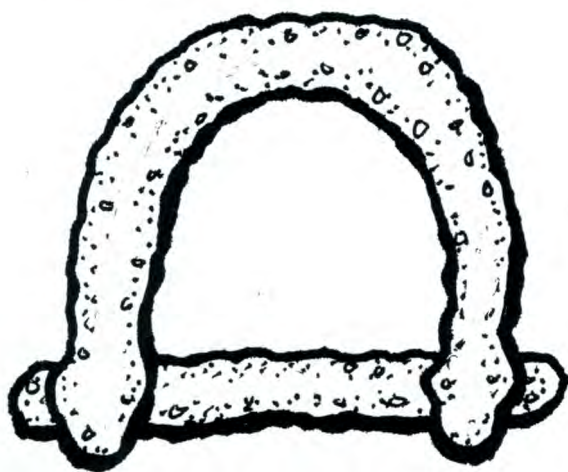
**A silver six-groschen of John III Sobieski, struck in 1684 showing the mature portrait of the king. Gumowski, 2011.**

In 1683 the Turks occupying Hungary began to expand their European empire and invaded Austria and besieged Vienna. During this long terrible siege the Viennese were deprived of food supplies and became desperate. A united European force, made up of the armies of the German states and Poland, led by John III Sobieski, came to the city's rescue. In the battles that followed, the Europeans were victorious and the defeated Turks retreated to Hungary. This was a turning point in western European history and all these facts are documented in history. However, typical of all such great, and miraculous, events many fables were created about the relief of Vienna.

A Jewish 'grandmothers' tale' supposedly described what happened after the victory at Vienna. John III Sobieski and his cavalry troopers, who had been instrumental in defeating the Turks, held a victory parade



in the main street of the city. The grateful Viennese came out in droves and escorted John II and his cavalry along the main street by holding on to the stirrups of his horsemen and running alongside the horses. This was a traditional gesture of gratefulness, admiration and respect conferred on cavalry in those days by the civilian population and to be permitted to hold onto a stirrup was considered a great honor. According to the legends, the Jewish bakers lining the route of the parade were so impressed by this joyous sight of victorious horsemen with happy citizens clinging to their stirrups that they returned to their shops and baked small bread rolls in the shape of the stirrups to sell as souvenirs to the crowds of celebrants. The stirrups of those days resembled a rotated, capital letter 'D'. Just after the siege was lifted, the starving Viennese had been given flour to bake bread but so little was immediately available that the bakers made very small loaves so that every citizen could have a share. To compensate for their small sizes, the clever merchants baked symbolic and interesting shaped loaves that would encourage the people not to complain. Some historians even suggested that, at that time, the Viennese bakers invented the 'croissant', or 'hornchen' (little horn) in German, a bent, shaped bread roll inspired by the crescent moon on the Turkish flags that had surrounded the city. Evidently, the stirrup-shaped roll was a symbolic, shaped bread that raised the morale of the starving population as well as serving as a souvenir of the victory over the Turks.



**Original Viennese bagel, made after the defeat of the Turks in 1683, as imagined by the author and resembling a Polish cavalry stirrup.**



Stirrups in German were called 'steigbugels', or in a shorter form, 'bugels', and authors combined this term with the Austrian/Yiddish word 'beugal', meaning a round loaf of bread, to create the name of 'bagel' for the stirrup-shaped bun. Other experts say that the German word for a ring, 'beigel' or the German word 'beigin', to bend, were the origins for the modern name, bagel, and certainly all of these terms are possible candidates for the name of the bread roll. Some authorities even suggest that the Russian round buns called 'bubliki' or the Hungarian pastry named 'beigli' are the origins for the word, bagel. Leaving this dispute for the enjoyment of later scholars and food-lovers, a story 'topper' was offered in the traditional Jewish fable that said the bagels became very popular to eat in Viennese cafes with the coffee made from the beans taken from the Turkish camps as the booty of war. The Europeans had never seen coffee before, and the Turks called the drink 'Kaffir', meaning an infidel, because they had found it being used by the African tribes they conquered. Of course, Viennese coffee houses, serving coffee and the famous Viennese pastries, became famous in later history especially among Austrian and Hungarian Jews. Eventually the bagel became popular and spread throughout eastern Europe and then was brought by immigrants to North America where it became identified as a 'Jewish bread' as distinctive as the Passover Matzah.



A silver, ten zlotych coin struck in 1933 to commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victory over the Turks at the siege of Vienna and showing a portrait of John III Sobieski, king of Poland. Gumowski 2606. *Standard Catalog of World Coins*, Krause, 23.



All these facts and fables about bagels sound exaggerated however, it is recorded that the Romans made a boiled and baked bread roll with a hole in the middle and, from years of contact with the Romans, the Jewish diaspora that later settled in Austria, must have known how to make these ancient breads. In fact, the first literary mention of bagel-like bread rolls appeared in a book titled 'Community Relations of Cracow', issued in Poland in 1610, and it said that 'beygals' should be given to women in childbirth.

Beygals are not described in this document but it is assumed they were fancy, sweet bread rolls used to comfort new mothers. Some medieval historians even claim that Polish mothers used a donut-shaped bread roll as a nutritious teething ring for their babies, so the bagel was well known in Poland at least 73 years earlier than the date of the siege of Vienna.

In the final analysis, the stories about John III, Sobieski, his friendship to the Jews of Poland and his leadership in the relief of Vienna, are historical facts and lend credence to the bagel legend. More important, the siege of Vienna is noted by scholars as being the most critical event of that century because it stopped the expansion of the Ottoman empire into Europe and eliminated the Muslim danger to the Christian world.

It was inevitable that many legends, children's songs, dramatic plays, poetry and artwork were created to symbolically commemorate this important historical event. So, it is possible that a Jewish folk tale about a circular bread roll was produced to honor the relief of Vienna by a Polish king who was friendly to the Jews. Consequently, every time we eat a bagel we should remember the king of Poland, John III Sobieski, and the Jews of Vienna, a community that contributed much to Jewish customs and culture.



## **The Gratz Family and the Northern Liberties Gas Company**

The company was organized under an ordinance of the District of the Northern Liberties in 1838, with an authorized capital of \$100,000, divided into shares of \$50 each. In 1844 it was incorporated with its capital stock limited to \$200,000. Its purpose was to 'construct and maintain suitable works for the manufacture of high carbureted hydrogen gas from bituminous coal and other substances, for the purpose of public and private illumination in the district of the Northern Liberties, or in streets dividing that district from those opposite.' The district of Northern Liberties is now part of the city of Philadelphia.

This plant is noteworthy because it was the first to extract gas from native supplies of bituminous coal along the Monongahela, Ohio, and Allegheny rivers. Inventor Joseph Battin was appointed superintendent of the Gas Works, by the Board of Managers of Northern Liberties in 1841. He contributed much to gas technology by perfecting a machine for breaking and screening coal in his own shop near the gas works. Battin obtained the first U.S. patent granted for a 'coal-breaking machine' in 1843. Further refinements on the breaker caused Pennsylvania coal land operators to sign lucrative agreements with him.

Among the investors of the gas works were several members of the Gratz family. The Gratz were an American family prominent in the affairs of the city of Philadelphia and of the state of Pennsylvania. Brothers Michael and Bernhard emigrated to the United States around the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Michael had nine children, three of which Joseph, Jacob and Benjamin together with their nephew Isaac Hays, daughter of their sister Richea, played a major part in the Northern Liberties Gas Co.

Hyman Gratz, the eldest son of Michael was born in Philadelphia Sept. 23, 1776; died Jan. 27, 1857, and was educated in the public schools of his native city. In 1798 he joined his brother Simon in partnership as wholesale grocer, and later turned his attention to life-insurance. In 1818 he was elected director of the Pennsylvania Company for Insurance on Lives and Granting Annuities, and twenty years later was elected president of the company. On the founding of the Pennsylvania Academy for Fine Arts, in which his brother Simon Gratz took some part, he served on the directorate of the institution (1836 - 1837), and held the office of treasurer from 1841 - 1857. On the retirement of Hyman Marks as treasurer of the Congregation Mickveh Israel of Philadelphia Sept. 19, 1824, Gratz succeeded him, and was reelected annually until 1856.



When the first Jewish Publication Society of America was organized in Philadelphia (1845) he was one of its managers. On the receipt in the United States of the news of the persecution of Jews in Damascus on August 27, 1840, Gratz, was elected chairman of the meeting of the Congregation Mickveh Israel to protest against that persecution.

With a deed dated Dec. 18, 1856, Gratz set aside stocks, bonds, and other property for the purpose of establishing "a college for the education of Jews residing in the city and county of Philadelphia" which today is known as Gratz College.

Rebecca Gratz was born in Philadelphia March 4, 1781; died Aug. 27, 1869. She consecrated her life and labors to the well-being of her kind, and was the promoter of religious, educational, and charitable institutions for their benefit. Elected (1801) secretary of the Female Association for the Relief of Women and Children in Reduced Circumstances, Rebecca Gratz soon saw the need of an institution for orphans in Philadelphia, and she was among those instrumental in founding the Philadelphia Orphan Asylum in 1815. Four years later she was elected secretary of its board of managers, which office she continued to hold for forty years. Under her auspices were started a Hebrew Sunday-school of which she subsequently became superintendent and president, resigning in 1864) and a Female Hebrew Benevolent Society (about Nov., 1819). In 1850 she advocated in "The Occident," over the signature "A Daughter of Israel," the foundation of a Jewish Foster Home; and her advocacy was largely instrumental in the establishment of such a home in 1855. Other organizations due to her efforts were the Fuel Society and the Sewing Society.

Isaac Hays, the eldest of 4 children, was born into a wealthy Philadelphia, Pa, merchant family in 1796. When he graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a bachelor of arts degree in 1816, his father, intending for him a career in the East India trade (the family enterprise), started him out in the "counting house." The young Isaac decided after a year that the trade was not for him, and he opted instead for a career in medicine.

Isaac Hays became a distinguished pioneer in the early days of American ophthalmology. His contributions may have been mightier by the pen than by the scalpel, but his niche in the history of ophthalmology is secure. In addition to actively practicing ophthalmology and fostering its growth into a recognized medical specialty, Hays also had the time and talent to edit one of the premier medical journals of his day, to become one of the founders of the American Medical Association (AMA), to author the first code of ethics of the AMA, and to edit or write works as diverse as Treatise on Diseases of the Eye, American Ornithology, and many other



articles. A payment order to the Treasurer of the Northern Liberties Gas Works was signed by Isaac Hays as chairman of Committee of Works.

Joseph Gratz was the was secretary of the Congregation Mickveh Israel for a long period and a director of the Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb. It was during his term of office that on Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> 1846, he presented one share of stock in the Northern Liberties Gas Works to the President and Treasurer of the Congregation House of Israel.

Northern Liberties remained the only private gas company after the 1854 Consolidation of the municipalities in Philadelphia County. In 1956 it was absorbed into the Philadelphia Gas Works.

## NORTHERN LIBERTIES GAS COMPANY,

No. 204 Incorporated by the State of Pennsylvania. 1 Share.

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## About Pope Pius II

**Adapted from a Harritz article by Eliahu Salpeter**

Efforts to canonize Pope Pius XII as a saint of the Catholic Church are in high gear. The pope who reigned during the Holocaust, whose detractors have called him "Hitler's Pope" and defenders say used his moral and political influence to save thousands of Jews, is once again dominating conversations in the Vatican.

In recent weeks, both supporters and critics have increased their activities relating to the plan to declare the former pope a saint. While Jewish organizations and figures have called on Pope Benedictus XVI to stop the move, conservative circles in the Vatican have been spreading information intended to revive the canonization process. It is possible that this renewed activity is connected to Benedictus XVI's election to the Holy See. The pope had once been viewed as a representative of conservative streams in the church and the assumption is that he would be open to Pius XII's sanctification. At the same time, Jewish circles hope that Benedictus XVI, as a person of German origin, will be sensitive to a Holocaust-related issue and be careful not to offend the Jewish community.

Many Jewish leaders see this as an internal Christian affair in which Jews have neither the authority nor the duty of intervening. All the same, since the debate over Pius XII primarily revolves around his attitude toward the Holocaust, the Jews have the right, and perhaps even the duty, to voice their opinion, particularly given the Catholic Church's historical role in persecuting the Jews.

Pius XII's decision to shelve an edict issued by his predecessor, Pius XI, which supposedly condemns Fascism and Nazism, is likewise proof of his attitude. One of the most lethal attacks on the silence of the pontiff during the Holocaust came from Susan Zuccotti, whose book "Under His Very Windows" was published in 2002. In her book, Zuccotti examines the pope's silence even as the Italians began arresting the Jews of Rome. The Vatican intervened only in cases where a Jewish man was married to a Christian woman and had himself converted to Christianity.

Additional studies reveal that Pius XII also did not protest when the Nazis banished 1,000 Italian Jews to the extermination camps. However, he did take real steps before the start of World War II to help some 3,000 Jews who converted to Christianity from different parts of Europe obtain immigration visas to Brazil.



Pius XII was born Eugenio Pacelli. He was suspected of being pro-German even before the outbreak of World War II. Before his election to the papacy, he served as cardinal secretary of state in the Vatican and in this capacity, signed an agreement with Hitler in 1933 according to which the Nazis would not intervene in the church's internal affairs in Germany. In return, the church would refrain from intervening in the Nazi regime.

The defense of Pius XII comes from members of the Catholic Church, but a few Jews have also chimed in, most notably Rabbi David Dalin, whose book "The Myth of Hitler's Pope" refutes the attacks on the pontiff. The defenders' main contention is that the pope carried out all his actions secretly because he feared that openly criticizing the Nazis would only worsen the situation of the Jews and Catholics in occupied Europe.

Other historians confirm that the pontiff did act secretly, but that he did so only after 1942, when the Americans warned that those who had participated in the persecution of the Jews would face punishment, and when it became clear to the Vatican that the Allies would win the war.

From what is known today about Pius XII, it is difficult to describe him as a supporter of the Jews. Despite repeated demands by historians and Jewish organizations, the Vatican has published only a small portion of its archival materials from the World War II period. Therefore, on both sides of the scale, there are only partial testimonies to the acts and the omissions of the pontiff.

There is no doubt that from the reports of church representatives in occupied Europe, the pope knew full well what was happening to the Jews at the hands of the Germans and their various puppet governments. Some of these governments defined themselves as Catholic, such as those in Croatia and Slovakia, which were headed by Catholic priests. It is also clear that most of the acts of intervention mentioned in the pontiff's defense were made on behalf of Jews who had converted to Christianity.

The pope's problematic attitude continued even after the victory of the Allies. A monastery where two Jewish brothers had been hidden and baptized during the war refused to return the boys to their family on the grounds that they were now Christians. A letter sent by the Vatican in the name of the pope to the heads of Catholic churches in Europe was published in the wake of this story. The letter instructed the churches not to return children who had been hidden and baptized to their Jewish parents. It is also known that the Vatican assisted many Nazi war criminals in escaping from Europe to South America after the war.

On the other hand, it is also well-documented that Catholic monasteries all over occupied Europe hid thousands of Jews, mainly



children, and it is difficult to assume that many would have done so had the pope expressed his opposition.

In the last year of the war, when the Russians were already advancing in the direction of Hungary, Pius XII was among the world leaders who tried to pressure Admiral Miklos Horthy to stop the expulsion of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. The expulsions stopped on July 9, 1944 after more than 400,000 Jews had already been expelled. It is also known that as early as 1942, Pius XII had advised the German and Hungarian cardinals to condemn the murder of the Jews.

It is doubtful whether it is possible to decide one way or the other on this matter as long as the Vatican denies access to all the documents in its archives from the period of the war. The fate of these archives will also serve as a sign of how Benedictus XVI will act during his tenure as pope, and not merely on the issue of the Jews and Pius XII.

This story is illustrated by medals of Pious II





## **PROFILE OF A COLLEGE PROFESSOR**

Steve Feller was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. He married his wife Barbara in 1971 and they have two daughters, Heidi and Ray. Steve began his educational career when he became a teaching assistant in 1973 at Clarkson College of Technology. He earned his Ph.D. in Physics at Brown University and soon became a teaching assistant there as well until 1975. Steve became a private tutor in Providence, Rhode Island, a Special Lecturer at Providence College, and a Volunteer at Brennan Middle School in Attleboro, Massachusetts and in 1979, he moved his family to Cedar Rapids, Iowa where he became a Professor of Physics at Coe College. Steve has also been a Visiting Scientist in Athens, Greece, was a Fulbright Scholar in Reading, United Kingdom, and was a Visiting Professor again at Coventry, UK and Kumamoto, Japan. Steve has now been at Coe College for 29 years.

Through the years, Steve has been the recipient of many awards throughout his educational career. To name a few: C.J. Lynch Outstanding Teacher Award; American Physical Society Prize for Research; Iowa Professor of the Year, named by the Carnegie Foundation; was named as a Fulbright Scholar to the United Kingdom; Distinguished Iowa Scientist; and named as Advisor of the Year by the American Institute of Physics. Steve belongs to numerous professional organizations. To name a few: The American Ceramic Society; the Society of Glass Technology; and the American Physical Society. He was president of the National Physics Honor Society, was made Fellow of the Society of Glass Technology (UK); was elected Fellow of the American Ceramic Society; and was re-elected again as president of the National Physics Honor Society.

Steve became a collector at the early age of 7 years old, when his father, who ran a newspaper stand on Broadway, would bring home numerous coins for Steve to begin his collection, such as Indian Head pennies, Morgan dollars, Liberty nickels and so on. Steve has acquired several different collections during his more than 50 years of collecting: stamps, lots of books, baseball items and autographs. His prize autograph is an authentic letter from Albert Einstein with his signature. Steve happens to be a Yankee fan and belongs to the Society for American Baseball Research. He also belongs to several other organizations: the ANA; SPMC; IBNS, where he was the journal editor for 17 years; the Chicago Coin Club; the Iowa Numismatic Assoc.; the Cedar Rapids Coin Club and AINA. Throughout the years, Steve has spoken on numismatics at several ANA conventions, at the Memphis Paper Money Shows; the Chicago Coin Club, the Cedar Rapids Coin Club and various civic groups and synagogues.



Steve has been an active AINA member for a long time. In the mid-1980's, he invited Mel Wacks to come to Coe College to give some presentations. Steve handled the AINA slide programs for all the INS clubs for many years and he has written numerous articles for the Shekel, the most recent one appeared in the Jan/Feb 2008 issue. To date, Steve has written nearly 50 articles for either the Shekel or other numismatic publications and he has been the recipient of several awards for his numismatic writing efforts: he was presented the AINA Milton Fishgold Award in 1983 and 1984; he has received several ANA publication awards for the IBNS Journal; and he received an ANA Presidential Award, along with his daughter Ray for their co-writing efforts, on their recently-published book, "Silent Witnesses: Civilian Camp Money of World War II".

Steve's main focus has been Numismatics of the Holocaust and this 168 page book, which was published by BNR Press in 2007, won a Book of the Year award from the NLG. For this book, both Steve and his daughter Ray did extensive research on location at several sites of German camps in Europe, British camps for Jews on the Isle of Man, at the Yad Vashem Museum in Israel, at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., and at the Holocaust Museum in Houston, Texas. Steve also wrote the Exhibit Catalog on the Charlton and Gloria Meyer collection of Holocaust Numismatics that was donated to the Holocaust Museum Houston and is featured in his book.



*Written by Donna J. Sims*  
NLG



## How Victor Ries shaped the future of the Jewish-American Hall of Fame medals

By Mel Wacks



*Victor Ries continues to create works of art even after celebrating his 100th birthday.*

When plans were made to launch the Jewish-American Hall of Fame medal project in 1968, Victor Ries, who was artist-in-residence at the Magnes Museum in Berkeley, California, was asked to submit design ideas. The first honoree was, appropriately, Rabbi Judah L. Magnes, who was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay area, and who capped a distinguished career in Jewish communal life by serving as the first President of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Victor Ries was born in Germany on October 26, 1907. He learned silversmithing, but left in 1933, when Hitler came to power. Victor went to Palestine, where his first job was at Friedlander, the only metal factory in Tel Aviv. In 1935, the Bezalel School of Design opened, and he was hired to teach jewelry and metalsmithing. In addition, Victor had his own workshop and executed many orders for large decorative work in Haifa and Jerusalem, in association with famed architect Erich Mendelsohn. After immigrating to the United States, Victor again did some work together with Mendelsohn, and later did many designs for churches and synagogues in the San Francisco Bay area.

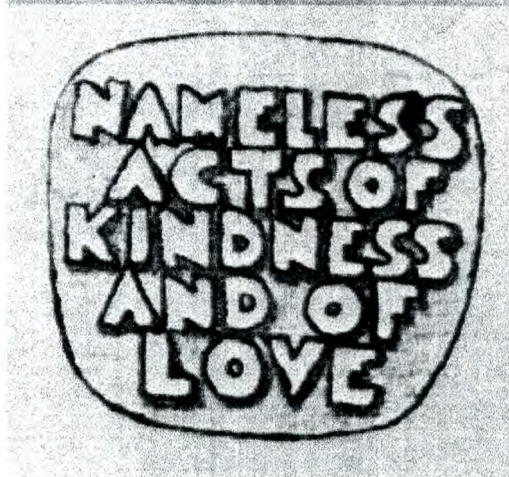
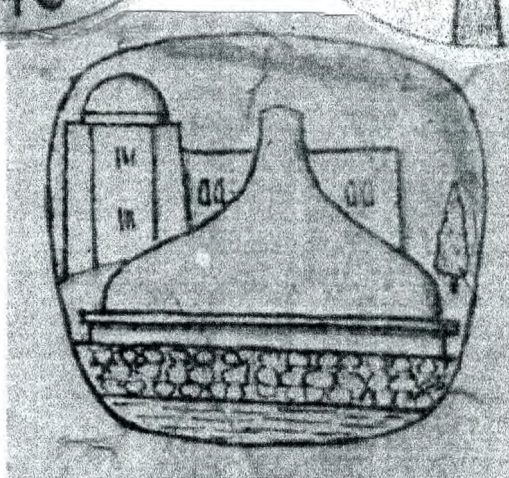
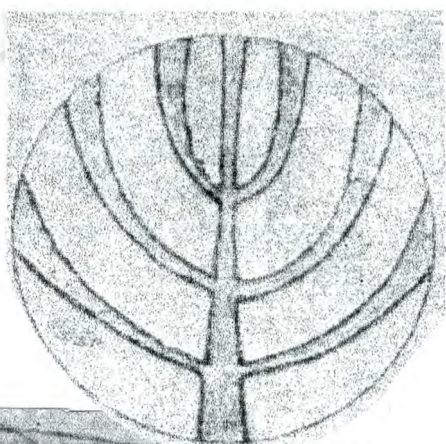


Victor Ries unexpectedly submitted proposed designs for the Judah L. Magnes medal that were not round. Victor had used similar shapes before – for Gleeson Library Associates, University of San Francisco. The design of the Library of the Hebrew University and the Shrine of the Book (containing the Dead Sea Scrolls), complemented by the unique tapezoidal shape convinced Jewish-American Hall of Fame founder Mel Wacks to adopt the shape for this and future medals in the series.



*1968 medallion plaques by Victor Ries.*





*Preliminary sketches for round and trapezoidal shapes for Judah L. Magnes medal.*



Victor Ries used an unusual technique to create the original large models for the Judah L. Magnes medal. Whereas most medalists prepare their models from clay, which is cast in plaster-of-paris, Victor prepared the models in a similar manner as his large architectural sculptures – by cutting and assembling pieces of metal and other materials. He hammered the wall surrounding the Shrine of the Book, to give it texture.



The total mintages for Ries' Judah L. Magnes medal are: 585 bronze and 265 pure silver. In 1985, Mel Wacks presented a medal to the Hebrew University for display in Judah L. Magnes' old office at the top of the library building that is pictured on the medal.

Jewish-American Hall of Fame medals have been issued every year since 1969 – with all but three produced in the trapezoidal shape innovated by Victor Ries. Wacks gives much of the credit for the success of the Jewish-American Hall of Fame medals to the distinctive shape created by Victor Ries.



## Shimon Rokach, The Jewish Sheik

Throughout the ages, Jaffa served as the "gate to Zion," even in periods when it had no permanent Jewish inhabitants. Travelers and immigrants intending to settle in Jerusalem and the country's other "holy cities" entered the country via its port, which continued to constitute the gateway for the first two large waves of Zionist immigration, from 1882 onward.

The First Aliyah caused a profound change in Jaffa's Jewish community. It was there that the first signs of political Zionism appeared, that the first Zionist public institutions were established, and that foundations were laid for both Hebrew education and Jewish industry. While Jaffa's Jewish community previously totaled only about 1,000 persons, 5,000 new immigrants settled there, thronging the narrow and dirty lanes of the town and living in alien and often hostile surroundings where they were dependent on the whims of Arab landlords.

To alleviate their lot, the Jerusalemite Shimon Rokach founded a welfare society named Benei Zion in 1884, simultaneously establishing together with his brother Eliezer a second society, Ezrat Israel, whose functions went beyond giving alms. It aided in establishing a hospital, and also initiated the building of Jaffa's first Jewish quarter, Neveh Zedek, in 1887.

For this purpose, an area of about 14,000 square yards was acquired from Aharon Chelouche, one of the founders of Jaffa's Jewish community. Jaffa Jews were delighted with this quarter, dubbing it "the Parisian houses," although with its narrow lanes, tightly packed houses, and absence of sanitary facilities, it differed very little from Jaffa's other quarters. Its importance, however, lay in the fact that it assembled Jews in a geographical community framework based on fraternal relations.

Jaffa's second Jewish quarter, Neveh Shalom, was founded in 1891 by Zerah Barnett. It extended over about 10,000 square yards, and was acquired from Arabs. The homes put up for sale remained empty until the rabbi of the Jaffa community, Naphtali Herz Halevi, bought the first house. Others followed him, and a *talmud torah*, Sha'arei Torah, was opened there in 1896 by the Ashkenazi community. The quarters soon combined their religious character with the new national spirit. Absorbing more inhabitants from among the Sephardi Jews, they expanded and linked up with each other.



Neve Zedek, which means Oasis of Justice in Hebrew was the first neighborhood built outside of Jaffa's walls. The city of Tel Aviv evolved from this new venture. The man behind the construction of the new neighborhood and the undisputed leader of new community, some even referred to him as a Jewish *sheik*, was Shimon Rokach.

Shimon Rokach was born in Jerusalem. He was sent to Jaffa, in 1884, by his father, who had obtained the rights to collect tolls on the Jerusalem-Jaffa road from the Turks. His task was to oversee the Jaffa end of the operation.

Rokach was an illustrious public servant, who was active in many different areas. He was one of the first to organize the planting of orange groves in the Sharon and to devise a marketing system for the citrus fruit, which included exports to Europe. He was the manager of the Pardess Cooperative, which consolidated the orange production of all the Jewish owned groves of fruit, arranged the packing and shipping to many countries. He also started a wood packing facility to manufacture the wooden crates to hold the oranges, This was in operation until the beginning of the First World War.

In 1902, a cholera plague hit the coastal city of Jaffa. The city's Muslim, Christian and Jewish cemeteries were filling up quickly. He was instrumental in building a new Jewish cemetery outside the city's limits. Shimon Rokach arranged to purchased a distant sand lot for the cemetery. A "Black Wedding" ceremony where two orphans were married was held immediately following the burial of the victims, aimed at stopping the curse of plague. The ceremony proved to be a big success as the plague ended, and Jaffa's residents went back to burying their dead in the ancient city's cemeteries. Thus, seven years later, in 1909, when the foundation to Tel Aviv was laid, the settlement had a ready-made cemetery.

An Austrian architect designed the Rokach House, which people came from afar to see, because of its unique dome. The house, which was built in 1887, was one of the first ten houses in Neve Zedek. Today it is an acknowledged historic site and museum. But it wasn't always that way. Over the years as the city of Tel Aviv developed, Neve Zedek saw a downward decline. The house was abandoned for about 30 years and was in terrible disrepair. It's hard to believe, but this historic house was actually slated for demolition. Lea Majaro-Mintz, Rokach's granddaughter, who is an artist, undertook a legal battle that lead to the private restoration of the house. Today the Rokach House operates as a



private museum that features Majaro-Mintz's works and also serves as a venue for unique cultural events.

Shimon and Rachel Rokach had five children. Their son Israel served as deputy mayor of Tel Aviv under Meir Dizengoff and later was himself the mayor.

A Anglo-Palestine Company Ltd. bank check on the Society Pardess signed by Shimon Rokach illustrates this article. The check is dated Yaffa, le 14 Novembre, 1912 and is in the amount *Deux Cents Francs* (200 Francs.) A Turkish revenue stamp is affixed to the check and is cancelled by a rubber stamp marking of the Society. The check bears the inscription "Closed on Saturdays and Jewish Holidays."



An Austrian architect designed the Rokach House, which people came from afar to see, because of its unique dome. The house, which was built in 1887, was one of the first ten houses in Neve Zedek.



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The term International Style was applied to the American form of Bauhaus architecture. These are low buildings, usually two to four floors, built as single buildings and covered with light colored plaster. They were used as residential and public structures.

The coin depicts Tel Aviv's typical International Bauhaus Architecture characterized by its balconies and flat roofs, asymmetry, functionality and simplicity, and bears the emblems of UNESCO and the World Heritage Sites. The reverse design of each denomination includes a different architectural diagram of the Tel Aviv Bauhaus buildings.

Coin Design: Meir Eshel



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